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Cooperation between the United Nations and the Caribbean Community

Letter dated 26 March 1999 from the Permanent Representative of Haiti to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to you, in my capacity as coordinator of the CARICOM Group, the communiqué of the tenth inter-sessional meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community, which was held at Paramaribo on 4 and 5 March 1999 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the text circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 23.

(*Signed*) Pierre **Lelong**

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Annex

[Original: English]

Communiqué of the tenth inter-sessional meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community, held at Paramaribo on 4 and 5 March 1999

The Tenth Inter-Sessional Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community, was held in Paramaribo, Suriname on 4-5 March, 1999.

Heads of Government in attendance were: Rt. Hon. Owen Arthur, Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Barbados; Hon. Edison James, Prime Minister and Minister of Legal Affairs and Labour, Dominica; Dr the Hon. Keith Mitchell, Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Finance, Trade and Industry, Information, National Security and National Mobilisation, Grenada; Her Excellency Janet Jagan, O.E., President of the Republic of Guyana; Hon. David Brandt, Chief Minister, Montserrat; Hon. Dr. Denzil Douglas, Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Finance, Planning and National Security, St. Kitts and Nevis; Rt. Hon. Sir James E. Mitchell, Prime Minister, St. Vincent and the Grenadines; H.E. Dr. Jules A. Wijdenbosch, President of the Republic of Suriname, and Hon. Basdeo Panday, Prime Minister, Trinidad and Tobago.

Antigua and Barbuda was represented by His Excellency Colin Murdoch, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Ambassador to Cuba; The Bahamas by Honourable Janet Bostwick, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs; Belize by the Honourable Florencio Marin, Minister of Latin American Affairs; Jamaica by the Honourable Seymour Mullings, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade; and Saint Lucia by the Honourable Mario Michel, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Education, Human Resource Development, Youth and Sport. Also in attendance was His Excellency Emmanuel Fritz Longchamp, Minister of Foreign Affairs, representing the President of the Republic of Haiti.

Heads of Government also welcomed the Vice-President of the Dominican Republic, His Excellency Dr. Jaime David Fernandez Mirabel.

OPENING CEREMONY

The Opening Ceremony of the Tenth Inter-Sessional Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community was staged on Thursday, 4 March 1999 at Congress Hall, Paramaribo, Suriname and was chaired by Mr. Edwin Carrington, Secretary-General of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

In his Opening Remarks, the Secretary-General said it was "without doubt a special moment in the history of the Government and peoples of Suriname." He also stated that the quality of participation by youth representatives in the many activities marking the 25th Anniversary Celebrations of the Caribbean Community and in the Retreat of Heads of Government, should serve to assure the Community that there was much justification for the faith being placed in the youth of the Region.

Statements were also made by His Excellency Dr Jules Wijdenbosch, President of Suriname and Chairman in Office of the Conference of Heads of Government and the Honourable Basdeo Panday, Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago.

In his statement, His Excellency Dr. Jules Wijdenbosch indicated that "while the process of the comprehensive economic harmonisation and the establishment of the Single Market and Economy is taking place, CARICOM should continue to identify reliable partners to further develop and establish formal, structural and promising linkages of cooperation". He continued "we must enter the new millennium no less than a strengthened Caribbean with its own political agenda that is an integral part of the global agenda. CARICOM, focused and equipped on the basis of a modern, practical and sound concept of development, can be a valuable and effective instrument to this end."

His Excellency stated emphatically that "the current process of globalization should not be allowed to result in the political and economic marginalisation of developing countries and in the increased vulnerability of their peoples. All actors in the international community must commit themselves to turn globalization into the instrument which the world community may use to eliminate underdevelopment; for definitively relegating to the past disproportionate advantages for strong economies in relation to weak economies and making way for harmonious and well-balanced relations, and for translating dependence into solidarity with emerging nations in their struggle to achieve sustainable economic development."

The President added that at the Conference the objectives of CARICOM which were formulated at one time must surely be brought up for discussion. These objectives were based on the following characterization of economic integration - the process through which the economies of a group of countries are linked together more closely in an import substitution model so that extra strength is increasingly added to both the group as a whole and its components. Thus, it involves the maximum economic development of the countries.

In his statement, Prime Minister Panday drew attention to the fact that the Community's youngest Member State Suriname, was not only truly in the Community, but in charge of the Community. He emphasised that the Region, faced with the challenges of the new millennium, must incorporate its cultural and ethnic diversity with the technological versatility which the Region's solidarity and the new age demanded and which were the only means by which the Region would secure its place in the hemisphere.

Heads of Government also took the opportunity of the Opening Ceremony to present trophies to the winner, Trinidad and Tobago and runner-up, St. Kitts and Nevis of the Regional School's Debating Competition held in honour of the 25th Anniversary celebrations of the Community.

They also took advantage of the opportunity to present to Mr. Anthony Nesty, Surinamese Olympic gold medalist for swimming, a special award as one of the Community's 25 greatest sports personalities.

BANANAS

Heads of Government expressed grave concern over the continued action by the United States and other countries, at the WTO, to destroy the EU banana import regime and the disastrous consequences that this action would have on Caribbean economies and societies.

They deplored the US Government's decision to unilaterally impose sanctions on a wide range of EU products exported to the USA in response to the revised EU banana import regime and agreed to review their cooperation with the United States under the Caribbean- US Partnership for Prosperity and Security in the Caribbean.

In this regard, Heads of Government agreed to issue the following statement:

Statement on the United States' Unilateral Imposition of Sanctions Against the European Union Banana Import Marketing Regime

We, the Heads of State and Government of the Caribbean Community, meeting in Paramaribo, Suriname, deplore the precipitate unilateral action of the United States to impose sanctions against the European Union (EU) over its Banana Import Regime. This unauthorised and illegal action undermines the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and threatens the economic survival and social and political stability of several Caribbean countries.

The European Union modified its Banana Import Regime radically and implemented the new Regime on 1 January 1999, in full compliance with the ruling of the WTO. The United States' unilateral action has no basis in the WTO. Firstly, that Organisation now has underway a binding arbitration procedure to determine the merits of the proposal for remedy by the United States. It has requested additional information which the United States has not yet provided. Secondly, the WTO, under the emergency procedures of its dispute settlement mechanism, currently has two Panels determining the conformity of the new EU Regime with its original ruling. It is the only body which can determine compliance with its rulings and is due to announce its findings by 6 April 1999. The United States is therefore in flagrant violation of the Rules and Procedures of the WTO.

The banana industry is of vital economic interest to the Caribbean and the present United States action will destroy that industry. Europe is the Region's only export market and the Region's share of that market accounts for only 2 per cent of world trade in bananas. Despite that minuscule share of the trade, the banana industry is a major earner of foreign currency and provider of employment for several Caribbean countries.

Heads of Government have, on several occasions over the last five years, explained to President Clinton the disastrous consequences for the Caribbean of any precipitous disruption of its banana market in Europe. Recognising their mutual interest, Caribbean Heads of Government and President Clinton agreed upon and signed a "Partnership for Prosperity and Security in the Caribbean" Bridgetown, Barbados in May 1997. In that Bridgetown Accord, the Caribbean and the United States explicitly agreed "to work with all concerned parties to achieve mutually satisfactory marketing arrangements for Caribbean bananas, recognising the critical importance to Caribbean countries of the continued access of Caribbean bananas to the traditional markets of the European Union". They also recognised "the inextricable link between trade, economic development, security and prosperity" in their societies. The United States' recent action thus strikes at the very heart of the partnership with the Caribbean - its security and prosperity - and calls into question the entire partnership agreement.

The countries of the Caribbean Community have agreed to immediately review the Bridgetown Accord to determine the basis for continued cooperation.

5 March 1999

VISION 21 - THE COMMUNITY INTO THE NEXT DECADE

Heads of Government had an initial exchange of views on the Community in the next decade. An historic element of this exchange was the involvement of representatives of the youth of the Region during their Retreat at Saramacca.

In this discussion, it was generally acknowledged that central to the problem to Caribbean integration, was the fact that the method and structure of Governance of the Community was inadequate for spearheading and guiding a regional integration movement.

Heads of Government recognised that at the heart of the problem was the absence of any central executive/decision-making authority, capable of acting on behalf of Member States within the limits of the Treaty.

Heads of Government agreed that the status quo was unsustainable and that action needed to be taken with despatch both of a tactical and strategic nature to respond to the current situation.

Heads of Government agreed to continue their discussion at the Twentieth Meeting of the Conference on strengthening the system of Governance applied to Caribbean integration.

They expressed their deep appreciation to the youth representatives who participated in the dialogue. Heads of Government also expressed the hope that this involvement would assist the youth representatives to encourage their peers to participate fully in the political, economic and social development of their countries and the Community.

CANDIDATURES

Heads of Government undertook a preliminary exchange of views on the question of the choice of candidate for the position of Secretary-General of the Organisation of American States (OAS). Within this context they received a delegation from Costa Rica headed by HE Mr. Miguel Angel Rodriguez Echeverria, President of Costa Rica and including the Central American candidate for the post, former Costa Rican President Rafael Angel Calderon. They also received a delegation of the Government of Colombia led by Vice President Gustavo Bell who spoke on behalf of the incumbent Secretary-General, Colombian Cesar Gaviria.

PROGRESS TOWARDS THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CARICOM SINGLE MARKET AND ECONOMY (CSME)

Heads of Government reviewed the status of implementation of their decision that the key elements of the CSME would be implemented by 1999. They noted that to date, two of the nine Protocols required to revise the Treaty of Chaguaramas - Protocol I on the Organs and Institutional arrangements, Protocol II on Establishment, Services and Capital had been signed by all Member States, and have been provisionally applied, pending their definitive entry into force. They welcomed the signing of Protocols III and V by Montserrat at this Meeting. Thirteen Member States have now signed Protocol III - Industrial Policy - and eleven have signed Protocol V - Agricultural Policy. They agreed that the remaining Protocols should be ready for signature at the Twentieth Meeting of the Conference.

Heads of Government acknowledged that the test of the effectiveness of the Treaty revision will be in the implementation of the necessary national legislation and the establishment of the arrangements required at both national and Community levels. Heads of Government, therefore, agreed to make every effort to ensure that key instruments relating to Free Movement of Skilled CARICOM Nationals, the Social Security Agreement, the Intra-regional Double Taxation Agreement as well as arrangements governing the free movement of goods, services and capital are operational and effective in all Member States by the end of 1999.

ASSOCIATION OF CARIBBEAN STATES (ACS) AND THE EUROPEAN UNION (EU)/LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN SUMMITS

Heads of Government discussed preparations for the Second ACS Summit to be held on16-17 April 1999 in the Dominican Republic and the EU/Latin America and the Caribbean Summit to be held on 28-29 June 1999 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

They particularly welcomed the opportunity which the Second ACS Summit would afford them to enter into frank discussions on the pursuit of the mandates given in 1995 in the areas of tourism, trade and transportation, and on the future of the ACS.

UN SPECIAL SESSION TO REVIEW THE SIDS PROGRAMME OF ACTION (SIDS/POA)

Heads of Government reiterated their support for the SIDS/POA, recognising its importance to the sustainable development of their states and small island developing states generally.

Heads of Government, however, noted with concern that few resources had been extended by the international community, for the execution of the SIDS/POA and urged that the commitments in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and Bridgetown, Barbados be honoured. They undertook to continue to provide resources within the limitations of the Region's capacity for the development of the national programmes agreed to in the Programme of Action.

THE PROPOSAL TO HAVE THE CARIBBEAN SEA INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNISED AS A SPECIAL AREA IN THE CONTEXT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Heads of Government reiterated their support for the region to work towards having the Caribbean Sea internationally recognised as a Special Area in the context of Sustainable Development.

They acknowledged that such recognition would be gained only over time given the many issues which would need to be addressed by the international community. They emphasised the importance of the collaborative effort with the countries of the ACS which would be required for the successful promotion of this objective and were pleased that the ACS had included this issue as a major element of the proposed Environmental Strategy of the ACS region.

They urged that the Region continue to sensitise the international community, the media, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and the public in general to this objective.

MOVEMENT OF HAZARDOUS MATERIAL THROUGH THE CARIBBEAN SEA

Heads of Government noted that emissaries of France, Japan and the United Kingdom, among others, had brought to their attention, the imminent shipment of nuclear materials through the Caribbean Sea. They agreed to issue the following statement:

Statement On The Movement Of Nuclear Material Through The Caribbean Sea

Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community reiterate their unwavering opposition and that of their peoples to the blatant and persistent use of the Caribbean Sea for the transhipment of highly toxic nuclear materials. They again call on the Governments of France, Japan and the United Kingdom to respect the economic importance and ecological fragility of the Caribbean Sea and the well-being of the millions of people who depend on this unique resource for their very existence. Fully conscious of the catastrophic consequences of any accident for their peoples and for the ecological systems of the Caribbean Sea, they totally reject its use as a transit for such nuclear materials. This is in keeping with the repeated, expressed desire of the Governments and peoples of the Caribbean.

It is therefore with profound concern that Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community have learnt of the simultaneous despatch of two shipments of highly radio-active nuclear materials from France and the United Kingdom through the Caribbean Sea and the Panama Canal destined for Japan. They have also learnt that the current shipment of mixed uranium oxide fuel from the United Kingdom is only the first of a series. They are aware that, in addition to the usual safety concerns, there are credible reports that the physical security of such cargoes is grossly inadequate. The Heads express their outrage at the increasing frequency and volume of the hazardous materials being shipped and the fact that the Caribbean Sea has now become the preferred transit route, in spite of repeated protests by States in and bordering on the Caribbean Sea.

Heads of Government therefore appeal to the United States, with its responsibility for the passage of vessels through the Panama Canal, to use its authority to prohibit the shipment of hazardous nuclear materials via that route and into the Caribbean. They likewise reiterate their appeal to the Governments of France, Japan and the United Kingdom to desist from this dangerous misuse of the Caribbean Sea.

Paramaribo , 5 March 1999

FUND FOR REGIONAL Y2K INITIATIVE

Heads of Government welcomed the Commonwealth Secretariat's offer to provide funding for a Regional Y2K Initiative. A Year 2000 compliance training programme for National Y2K Coordinators from 19 countries and territories within the Region is scheduled for 15 March 1999 in Trinidad and Tobago. The Commonwealth Secretariat and the CDB are collaborating in this initiative. The meeting expressed its deep appreciation for the speedy and concrete response from these two agencies.

GUYANA

Heads of Government discussed the political situation in Guyana and issued the following Statement:

Statement by the Conference on the Situation in Guyana

The Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community, meeting in Paramaribo on 5 March 1999, deplore the renewal of political discord and unrest in Guyana and call for an immediate cessation and a return to the commitment and spirit of the Herdmanston Accord and the Saint Lucia Statement.

The Heads of Government urge the CARICOM Facilitator, to continue his efforts at inter-party dialogue.

MONTSERRAT

Heads of Government noted the report from the Chief Minister of Montserrat on the situation in that country. They reiterated support for the Government and people of that Member State and committed their countries to honouring original pledges for the construction of the CARICOM Village as early as possible. They agreed to place emphasis on the completion of construction of the fifteen houses in Phase I and in particular welcomed the further undertakings of those Member States which agreed to make contributions to the additional sums required to complete construction of the houses in this Phase.

A strategy will subsequently be presented for the completion of Phase II of the Village.

ST KITTS AND NEVIS

Heads of Governments received a report from the Prime Minister of St. Kitts and Nevis on efforts to resolve constitutional issues between the Government of St. Kitts and Nevis and the Administration of Nevis. They were pleased that a Constitutional Task Force had been

established to prepare a draft Constitution that would allow each unit in the federal structure to exercise autonomy over its internal affairs while the Federal Government would retain responsibility for defence, foreign affairs and the judiciary.

They expressed the hope that all political parties in the Federation of St. Kitts and Nevis would support the initiatives being taken on the issue.

THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN HAITI

Heads of Government thanked the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Haiti for his report on the current political situation in that country.
They agreed to continue to lend their support and assistance to Haiti and looked forward to Haiti becoming a full member of the Caribbean Community.

GUYANA/VENEZUELA

Heads of Government noted the existing climate of friendly relations between Guyana and Venezuela conducted in an atmosphere of respect and mutual understanding.

In that context, they welcomed the commitment of the newly-elected President of Venezuela, His Excellency Hugo Chavez Frias, towards the establishment of a High Level Bilateral Commission to further promote consultation and cooperation between the two countries.

They expressed satisfaction over the progress being made under the aegis of the United Nations Secretary General, through his good officer, Sir Alister McIntyre as was stated in the Joint Communique issued in Caracas, on the occasion of President Jagan's visit to Venezuela and the goodwill expressed in the interview between the Presidents of both countries on the occasion of the swearing-in ceremony of the President of Venezuela on 2 February 1999.

Heads of Government reaffirmed their support for the manner in which both countries had been striving to resolve their outstanding issues and reiterated their support for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Guyana and desire for a peaceful settlement to the controversy between Guyana and Venezuela.

THE AGREEMENT CONCERNING THE CARIBBEAN INVESTMENT FUND (CIF)

Heads of Government welcomed the signing by Dominica and St. Vincent and the Grenadines of the Agreement Concerning the Caribbean Investment Fund.

APPRECIATION

Heads of Government expressed their sincere appreciation to the Government and people of Suriname for the kind hospitality so generously bestowed on them and their delegations.

Date and Venue of the Twentieth Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government

Heads of Government accepted the offer by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to host the Twentieth Meeting of the Conference, to be held from 4 to 7 July 1999.